

**Councilmember
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Metropolitan King County Council
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King County Councilmember **Dow CONSTANTINE**

District Eight January 2004

Dear Friend and Neighbor,

It is an honor to continue to represent the citizens of King County Council District Eight. From Alki in the north to Seahurst in the south, and from South Park on the Duwamish River to Maury Island in the Central Sound, our district is a union of dozens of diverse neighborhoods, each with its unique needs and exciting opportunities. After representing you for five years in the legislature and another two here at the Council, I am still discovering new places and amazing people who are working to better our communities.

The Council just completed its 2004 budget deliberations, where we faced some very difficult choices. The biggest hurdle was yet another large revenue shortfall – this time \$24 million. The voter-approved parks levy, as well as a payment for use of Cedar Hills land fill, reduced the pressures on the general fund. Still, we made significant cuts in services, on top of the \$52 million in cuts required last year and \$41 million the year before.

The “structural gap” in the general fund – inflation in the cost of maintaining current services while revenues remain flat persists into the foreseeable future. This will require the Council to continue to work together, across party lines, to try to meet the basic needs of County residents while continually cutting expenditures. We succeeded under very difficult circumstances again this year, unanimously approving a balanced and responsible 2004 budget.

I have included some of the highlights of the adopted budget in this newsletter, along with some details important for local programs in Council District Eight. I am pleased that, even in bad times, the County budget was able to save some services important to our district.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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District Eight



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Protecting Our Drinking Water

Many people throughout King County depend on 12,000 private wells for their clean drinking water. The Department of Public Health has only three inspectors for the entire county to ensure the safety of those wells and the drinking water they produce. And yet, the Executive proposed budget would have eliminated two of those three inspectors. I worked – successfully - to restore these positions in the 2004 budget.

District Eight Budget Highlights

King County Awards West Seattle Three Conservation Futures Grants

West Seattle was the recipient of three King County Conservation Futures Grants in the adopted budget. Funding for the SW Alaska Street Park, Longfellow Creek/ Puget Creek project, and Sylvan Way Open Space project were all awarded grants for 2004 in the final budget.

Burien Teen Health Centers Saved

The Executive's proposed budget eliminated the Teen Health Centers in Burien and Renton. Thanks to a tremendous outpouring of public support, we were able to restore funding to keep these health centers open in 2004.

White Center/Boulevard Park Work Crew Returns

In the past, White Center and Boulevard Park have benefited from a work crew to clean up garbage and graffiti and assist in community renewal efforts. I was able to restore funding in the 2004 budget for a half-time work crew in North Highline to assist code enforcement and the White Center Development Authority in their efforts to make our neighborhoods cleaner.

North Highline Governance Study

One of the most pressing issues in North Highline – and one of the longest debated - is the issue of governance. Is it financially possible for the community to become its own city (incorporate)? Should the area join Seattle, Burien , or another city (annex)? While governance studies have been done in the past, citizens with whom I have spoken want better and more current information before making a decision about their community's future. The 2004 budget includes an appropriation of \$50,000 to review and update governance studies with the participation of local citizens.

White Center Food Bank Receives Retired Metro Van

The White Center Food Bank was awarded a retired Metro van this year to assist in their important work. White Center demonstrated a clear need, and so I was proud to nominate the Food Bank as one of the non-profit organizations to receive a van this year. It will be put to good use in the community.

Code Enforcement Preserved

In recent years, our code enforcement division has faced serious cuts as the general fund has been reduced. Code Enforcement Officers are the folks who work to protect neighborhoods against the occasional bad property owner or occupant – the one, for example, who turns his lawn and your street into an unlicensed wrecking yard. Personnel cuts were proposed again this year, but the Council was able to save all 10 Code Enforcement Officers for 2004.

Highline Senior Center Gets A Boost

The 2004 budget provided \$45,872 to the Highline Senior Center to help keep this facility open and operating. This senior center is a vital part of our community and provides services and activities for hundreds of seniors throughout the greater Burien and Highline area.

Creek Headwaters Protected

We have set aside \$500,000 of Conservation Futures funding to preserve fifty-three acres in the headwaters of Judd Creek on Vashon Island. This purchase will permanently protect wetland habitat, surface water quality, mature forest land, and a recharge area for the island's sole source aquifer.

Guarding our Valuable Nearshore

I have made nearshore protection a top priority. The 2004 budget targets \$30,000 for an ecological economic evaluation of the nearshore environment on Maury Island. This property lies within the area recommended by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources to be listed as an aquatic reserve.

Keeping Vashon Surfacewater Dollars "on-Island"

Every property owner and business on Vashon and Maury Island is charged a surface water management fee by the county. When this program began, an agreement was made to ensure that the fees raised on Vashon and Maury Islands would be used for island projects.

I added a requirement in this year's budget that the Water and Land Resources Division demonstrate how funds generated through the collection of surface water management fees will be allocated to rural drainage program projects on Vashon and Maury Islands during the next several years.

Development of Island Teens

The 2004 adopted budget provides \$10,000 for the Development of Island Teens program. As the county staggers under the enormous costs of crime and punishment, this modest investment in services for our Island youth continues the Council's commitment to help young people stay on the right track. I am proud that the county is a partner in this effort.

Vashon Medical Center

Granny's Attic, which helps support Vashon Maury Island Medical Center, will receive a grant for \$5,000 to assist them with their operations in the coming year.

Septic System Health & Safety

The proposed budget eliminated two of the ten positions for inspecting and permitting septic systems. Believing the consequent permitting and inspection delays to be an unacceptable hit to environmental health, the Council managed to restore one of the two positions in the adopted 2004 budget.

Water Taxi to Continue Sailing

The Elliott Bay Water Taxi will sail again in 2004! Funding for the service was included in the adopted budget. The service details will be worked out over the next several months.

Work will also continue to establish a permanent dock in West Seattle. Two federal grants have been obtained and county matching dollars have been committed. The new dock is essential for continuing this service into the future.